

THE EMBODIMENTS IN WHICH AN EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OR  
PRIVILEGE IS CLAIMED ARE DEFINED AS FOLLOWS

1. A system for on demand, provisioning of at least one application to at least one client, said system comprising:
  - an online provisioning and management system configured for communication with the at least one client over a computer communication system,
  - said online provisioning and management system configured to create an application instance of the at least one application in response to a rental request from the at least one client over said communication system,
  - said application instance being a separate, stand-alone installation of the at least one application,
  - said application instance being dedicated to the at least one client,
  - said online provisioning and management system configured to allow access to said application instance by users of the at least one client over said computer communication system, thereby permitting the users to use said application instance,
  - said online provisioning and management system configured to provide the at least one client with access to provisioning and management functions over said computer communication system for allowing the at least one client to rent, manage and maintain said application instance on demand.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein said online provisioning and management system is an application installed in an application service provider computing environment that is remote from the at least one client.
3. The system of claim 1, wherein access to said application instance by said users is provided by an application URI and access to said provisioning and management functions is provided by a provisioning and management URI, wherein said application URI and said provisioning and management URI are not identical.
4. The system of claim 1, wherein the at least one application is any off-the-shelf, server-based software application.
5. The system of claim 1, wherein said provisioning and management functions include the ability for the at least one client to save and restore a backup copy of said application instance to a local storage device to allow reconstruction of said application instance.
6. The system of claim 1, wherein said provisioning and management functions include the ability for the at least one client to set and change client configuration data relating to said application instance.
7. The system of claim 1, wherein said provisioning and management functions include the ability for the at least one client to upgrade said application instance to a newer code version of said application

instance, or downgrade said application instance to an older code version of said application instance.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein said provisioning and management functions include the ability to provide the at least one client with online demonstrations of the at least one application.

9. A method for on demand provisioning of at least one application to at least one client, said method comprising the steps of:

providing an online provisioning and management system configured for communication with the at least one client over a computer communication system and for providing provisioning and management functions;

receiving a rental request for the at least one application from the at least one client over said computer communication system;

causing said online provisioning and management system to create an application instance of the at least one application in response to said rental request, said application instance being a separate, stand-alone installation of the at least one application, said application instance being dedicated to the at least one client;

allowing access to said application instance by users of said at least one client over said computer communication system, thereby permitting said users to use said application instance; and

allowing access by the at least one client to said provisioning and management functions over said computer communication system, said provisioning and management function comprising features to allow the

at least one client to rent, manage, and maintain said application instance on demand.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein said online provisioning and management system is an application installed in an application service provider computing environment that is remote from the at least one client.
11. The method of claim 9, wherein access to said application instance by said users is provided by an application URI and access to said provisioning and management functions is provided by a provisioning and management URI, wherein said application URI and said provisioning and management URI are not identical.
12. The method of claim 9, wherein the at least one application is any off-the-shelf, server-based software application.
13. The method of claim 9, wherein said provisioning and management functions include the ability for the at least one client to save and restore a backup copy of said application instance to a local storage device to allow reconstruction of said application instance.
14. The method of claim 9, wherein said provisioning and management functions include the ability for the at least one client to set and change client configuration data relating to said application instance.

15. The method of claim 9, wherein said provisioning and management functions include the ability for the at least one client to upgrade said application instance to a newer code version of said application instance, or downgrade said application instance to an older code version of said application instance.
16. The method of claim 9, wherein said provisioning and management functions include the ability to provide the at least one client with online demonstrations of the at least one application.